

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9364
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 6669

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ASE, PFOR, ECIN, ETRD, AS, MY
SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER FRASER'S MEETING WITH ASEAN
LEADERS

REF: (A) CANBERRA 5662; () CANBERRA 5759

1. DISCUSSIONS IN RECENT WEEKS WITH MFA OFFICIALS AND
AUSTRALIAN DIPLOMATS INVOLVED IN ASEAN-AUSTRALIAN SUMMIT
IN KUALA LUMPUR LAST MONTH HAVE REVEALED THAT ALTHOUGH (AS
NOTED REFTELS) "FIVE PLUS ONE" ASEAN MEETING WITH PRIME
MINISTER FRASER HAD NOT BEEN CONFRONTATIONAL OR MARKED BY
HISTRIONICS, TOUGH NEGOTIATIONS OVER COMMUNIQUE ETC. HAD
LEFT SOME ILL FEELINGS. WHEREAS NEW ZEALAND DELEGATION
HEADED BY PM MULDOON HAD LITTLE TO OFFER IN WAY OF TRADE
CONCESSIONS TO ASEAN, NEW ZEALANDERS' BASIC DEMEANOR IN
DEALING WITH ASEANS HAD APPEARED CONCILIATORY AND THEREFORE
WAS WELL RECEIVED. INCONTRAST, ACCORDING TO ONE
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MIDDLE-ECHELON MFA INFORMANT, AUSTRALIANS CAME ON TOO
STRONG IN THEIR OWN DEFENSE AND MUCH OF THEIR ACTIONS
SEEMED ORIENTED BLATANTLY TOWARD WINNING POLITICAL
POINTS BACK HOME RATHER THAN APPEARING TO BE AT ALL
RESPONSIVE TO ASEAN INTERESTS.

2. ASEAN NEGOTIATORS WRE PARTICULARLY RESENTFUL OF

ONE INDIVIDUAL FROM FRASER'S OFFICE WHO WAS AN ESPECIALLY BRUTAL NEGOTIATOR, ONE CONTACT REMARKED. HE SAID THAT AFTER THE PROCEEDINGS WERE OVER THERE WAS SOME TALK IN ASEAN CIRCLES OF A SIX-MONTH "SOCIAL BOYCOTT" OF AUSTRALIAN FUNCTIONS TO PROTEST AUSTRALIAN BEHAVIOR DURING THE MEETINGS. AUSTRALIANS ARE NOT REPEAT NOT LIKELY TO BE INVITED FOR A REPEAT PERFORMANCE IN NEAR FUTURE, HE ADDED.

3. A SENIOR AUSTRALIAN DIPLOMAT HERE CONFIRMED THAT GOA'S "DAMAGE CONTROL" OPERATION HAD NOT REPEAT NOT BEEN ENTIRELY SUCCESSFUL, DESPITE LACK OF RANCOR IN PUBLIC, CITING THE SOCIAL BOYCOTT PROPOSAL AS EVIDENCE OF LEVEL OF MISUNDERSTANDING STEMMING FROM PROCEEDINGS.

4. WE HAVE NOW LEARNED THAT A JOINT NEW ZEALAND/AUSTRALIAN/MALAYSIAN NAVAL AND AIR FORCE EXERCISE INVOLVING AUSTRALIAN AIRCRAFT CARRIER AND NZ SHIP ENROUTE BACK FROM JUBILEE IN UK, WHICH WAS SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE EARLY THIS MONTH, WAS CANCELLED AT THE GOM'S REQUEST. SUBSEQUENT AUSTRALIAN REQUEST TO EXERCISE IN THE STRAITS OF MALACCA ITS SQUADRONS BASED AT BUTTERWORTH ALONE WAS DISAPPROVED BY GOM AS BEING "INAPPROPRIATE" BOTH IN THE WAKE OF THE ASEAN SUMMIT AND BECAUSE THE EXERCISE WAS TO TAKE PLACE IN THE STRAITS. ALTHOUGH IT MAY WELL BE THAT GOM CANCELLED EXERCISES DUE TO CONCERN THAT THIS AND OTHER INTERACTIONS WITH WESTERN NATIONS (E.G, RECENT
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COMSEVENTHFLT VISIT, ASEAN-US CONSULTATIONS, PM'S FORTHCOMING VISITS TO JAPAN AND U.S.) MIGHT UNDERMINE ITS NON-ALIGNED IMAGE, IRRITATION OVER AUSTRALIA'S ASEAN SUMMIT PERFORMANCE AND CONTINUED TARIFF BARRIERS MIGHT HAVE BEEN A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR. CERTAINLY THE STRAITS RATIONALE DOESN'T HOLD UP REGARDING THE GOM'S FOLLOW-ON CANCELLATION OF JOINT EXERCISES IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA (REPORTED TO THE AMBASSADOR BY THE AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER).

5. COMMENT: STRAINS IN AUSTRALIA'S RELATIONS WITH ASEAN, AS WELL AS BILATERALLY WITH MALAYSIA, ALTHOUGH UNFORTUNATE, ARE NOT REPEAT NOT TOTALLY SURPRISING. REF A CITED FACT THAT ASEAN NATIONS ARE IN MANZYRESPECTS ECONOMIC COMPETITORS, AND PRESENT ILL-FEELING ON PART OF MALAYSIA REFLECTS, TO A DEGREE, REAL OR PERCEIVED ECONOMIC PROBLEMS RELATING TO AUSTRALIAN TRADE POLICIES AND A TRADE IMBALANCE IN AUSTRALIA'S FAVOR. ADDITIONALLY, JUST TWO YEARS AGO MALAYSIA'S RELATIONS WITH AUSTRALIA SEEMED TO LOCAL OBSERVERS TO BE EXCELLENT, PROBABLY BETTER THAN WITH ANY OTHER NATION EXCEPT INDONESIA. THIS, HOWEVER, SEEMS TO HAVE GENERATED

INFLATED EXPECTATIONS THAT SET THE STAGE FOR A DOWNTURN
IN RELATIONS, WHICH SOME SAY BEGAN WITH STUDENT DEMON-
STRATIONS AGAINST LATE PRIME MINISTER RAZAK DURING HIS
VISIT TO AUSTRALIA IN OCTOBER, 1975. IN ANY CASE, THE
AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER HIMSELF IN VERY CAUTIOUS
IN DRAWING CONCLUSIONS REGARDING CURRENT GOM BEHAVIOR
TOWARD AUSTRALIA, AND HAS TOLD THE AMBASSADOR HE PLANS
TO PROBE FURTHER ON THE MATTER.

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